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Identical letters dated 27 December 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I am writing this urgent letter in order to inform you that after a long period of utmost restraint, the Government of Israel has decided to exercise, as of this morning, its right to self-defence. Israel is taking the necessary military action in order to protect its citizens from the ongoing terrorist attacks originating from the Gaza Strip and carried out by Hamas and other terrorist organizations.

For years, as we have reported to the Security Council once and again, Israeli citizens have been under daily attack by terrorist groups emanating from Gaza, most of them acting amid densely populated areas. In the past two months alone, more than 400 rockets and 200 mortar shells were fired at Israeli civilian communities. These deliberate attacks against civilians have intensified lately, in particular since mid-December, after Hamas announced the termination of the state of calm.

Hamas holds the sole responsibility for the latest events in Gaza. Despite ongoing rocket attacks for many days, Israel has exhausted all means and efforts to reach and maintain quiet and to respect the state of calm facilitated through the good offices of Egypt. Nevertheless, the lull offered to Hamas was deliberately violated by the terrorists and cynically abused in order to acquire deadly weapons, hence placing more than one quarter of a million of Israelis under the daily threat of rockets and terrorism.

The State of Israel has thus decided to actively fight terrorism and protect its citizens from further terrorist attacks through a decisive response, which is conducted in accordance with the inherent right of every State to self-defence as enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Israel's response is aimed solely against the terrorists and their infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. It is not directed at the civilian population. Israel is committed to preventing a humanitarian crisis and to minimizing harm to civilians and will continue to facilitate the work of international and humanitarian organizations.

No country would allow the continuous firing of rockets at its civilian population without taking the necessary actions to stop it. Israel expects the understanding and support of the international community for its actions as it confronts terrorism and advances the interests of all those who wish that peace and coexistence would prevail in our region.

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I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gabriela **Shalev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative